A stage with a dark grey background and a light grey floor with a perspective grid. Five gold spotlights are mounted on the ceiling, casting light downwards.

# WEEK 2

## Scientific foundation of psychology

### Unit 1: Wundt's cultural psychology

#### Wundt's cultural psychology

- ❖ The most important figure for psychology is Wilhelm Wundt.
- ❖ As a key figure representing both the natural sciences tradition and the cultural sciences tradition, Wundt believed that these two approaches to be complementary rather than being mutually exclusive (Danzinger, 1983).

## Wundt's cultural psychology

- ❖ Wundt credits Steinthal and Lazarus for introducing the concept of *Völkerpsychologie*, and for compiling the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*.
- ❖ Wundt cited the work of Vico and Herder and affirmed their viewpoints in the need for a historical and cultural analysis.

## Wundt's cultural psychology

- ❖ Wundt's unique contribution is adopting consciousness as the unit of analysis, introspection as the method and “will” or intention as the goal and the amalgamation of the psychological level of analysis with the cultural level of analysis.
- ❖ He provided further extensions and refinement of ideas laid down by Vico, Herder, Steinthal and Lazarus.

## Cultural psychology

- ❖ Wundt (1916) considered *Völkerpsychologie* or cultural psychology to be a new field of knowledge in which human actors occupy the center stage, affirming the position of Vico and Herder.

## Cultural psychology

- ❖ He pointed out that language, mythology, art, customs, and religions are products of collective human effort and "all phenomenon with which mental sciences deal are, indeed, creations of the social community" (p. 2).

## Cultural psychology

- ❖ He defined *Völkerpsychologie* as "investigations concerning the relations which the intellectual, moral, and other mental characteristics of people sustain to one another, as well as to studies concerning the influence of these characteristics upon the spirit of politics, art, and literature."

## Cultural psychology

- ❖ Individual psychological processes (individual consciousness) can be systematically investigated in a laboratory setting through controlled experimentation.
- ❖ The cultural patterns and dynamics, however, cannot be brought into a laboratory setting.

## Cultural psychology

- ❖ *Völkerpsychologie* represents a cultural level of analysis that encompasses the individual consciousness:

## Cultural psychology

*In the analysis of higher mental processes, Völkerpsychologie is an indispensable supplement to the psychology of individual consciousness. Indeed, in the case of some questions the latter already finds itself obliged to fall back on the principles of folk psychology.*

## Cultural psychology

*Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that just as there can be no folk community apart from individuals who enter into reciprocal relations within it, so also does folk psychology, in turn, presupposes individual psychology, or, as it is usually called, general psychology. The former, however, is an important supplement to the latter, providing principles for interpretation of the more complicated processes of individual consciousness. (Wundt, 1916, p. 3)*

## Cultural psychology

- ❖ Wundt asserted that *Völkerpsychologie* is necessary to provide a complete account of psychogenesis and that psychological investigations at the individual level cannot adequately do so.

## Developmental analysis

- ❖ Developmental analysis of individuals, cannot fully account for psychogenesis since a child is born into a pre-existing cultural community and is shaped by it.

## Developmental analysis

- ❖ The culture community in which a child is born into and intermediate social groups (such as family, tribe, and local community) must be examined historically since they are not fixed entities, but which have evolved through time and space.

## Developmental analysis

- ❖ He reaffirmed that each culture need to be understood from its own frame of reference and that the analysis of the historical evolution of a particular culture is fundamental to understanding people of that culture.
- ❖ *Völkerpsychologie* is expressed in observable products such as language, myths, customs, and folkways.

## Developmental analysis

- ❖ These products can be understood through ethnographic, comparative, and historical analyses. From these analyses, inferences can be made about their underlying nature and processes.



## Level of analysis

- ❖ He believed that the basic psychological processes underlying individual consciousness and cultural products are universal (Danzinger, 1983).

## Level of analysis

- ❖ His grand design was to first separate different levels of analysis (physiological, individual, and cultural) and to discover for each level an appropriate unit and method of analysis (i.e., consciousness and introspection at the individual level and *Völkerpsychologie* at the cultural level).

## Level of analysis

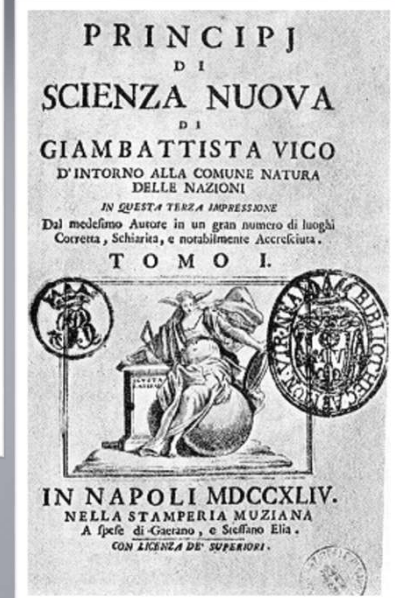
- ❖ Once basic processes are discovered at each level, Wundt proposed that this knowledge could be integrated to provide coherent and universal understanding of human beings.



Giambattista Vico  
(1688-1744)

## Giambattista Vico (1688–1744)

- ❖ The first leading figure representing the cultural sciences tradition who influenced Wundt is an Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico (1688–1744).



## Human sciences

- ❖ Vico separated the natural world from the human world.
- ❖ He noted that nature exists prior to, and independent of, human creation.
- ❖ Humans beings are mere observers of nature and as such understanding about nature can only be indirect and inferential

## Human sciences

- ❖ We can classify the content of the natural world into regularities, dissect them, combine and recombine them, simulate them, and superimpose mathematical techniques, but results only yield correlations between two or more observed events and we infer causality between the events.

## Human sciences

- ❖ We can never truly understand what it is like to be a bird, dog, flower, or stone. We can only observe and infer their nature.
- ❖ In the human world, direct and first-hand knowledge is possible since each individual is not just a mere observer but an actor participating in, reacting to, and contributing to, its development.

## First person understanding

- ❖ In the physical world, humans can only ascertain objective, impartial, third person knowledge.
- ❖ In the natural sciences (physics, botany, and entomology), humans can describe a table, a tree, and an ant, but cannot obtain phenomenological knowledge (what it is like to *be* a table, a tree, or ant).

## First person understanding

- ❖ In the human world, we can ascertain not only impartial, third person knowledge, but also the perspective of the actor (the first person "I"), and this knowledge can be communicated to others and understood by a second person (the second person "you").

## First person understanding

- ❖ Although knowledge in the natural sciences is limited to objective, impartial, third person knowledge, in psychology first, second, and third person perspectives can be obtained.
- ❖ We can know and feel what it is like to be a person, and we can communicate this knowledge to others and analyze the information objectively.

## Creative process

- ❖ Works of art (such as novels, paintings, movies, and music) are the media through which we communicate our inner phenomenology and agency.
- ❖ In the natural world we do not question the motives, intentions, and purpose of animal behavior or objects.

## Creative process

- ❖ Such an act would be considered irrational, or a misapplication of categories known as anthropomorphism or animism (Berlin, 1976).
- ❖ In the human world, these questions are essential to the understanding of human action.

## Creative process

- ❖ As Vico pointed out, we ask "why do men act as they do...what mental states or events (e.g., feelings or volitions) are followed by what acts, but also why, why persons in this or that mental or emotional state are or are not likely to behave in a given fashion, what is, or what would be, rational or desirable or right for them to do, and how and why they decide between various courses of action."

## Purpose and intention

- ❖ Art, history, society, culture, language, mathematics, and even science are products of collective human effort.
- ❖ As creators of these products human beings, people could have direct, first-hand knowledge of their world.

## Purpose and intention

- ❖ In the human world, "we judge human activity in terms of purposes, motives, acts of will, decisions, doubts, hesitations, thoughts, hopes, fears, and desires; these are among the ways in which we distinguish human beings from the rest of nature" (Berlin, 1976, p. 22).



## Purpose and intention

- ❖ He stated that humans possess an imaginative faculty that allows individuals to examine their own feelings, thoughts, and acts, as well as those of others and of other cultures.
- ❖ Humans embody their feelings, attitudes, and thoughts in symbols, such as art and music.

## Purpose and intention

- ❖ These symbols are natural means of self-expression and are dependable reflections of the mind and outlook of the person who has created them.

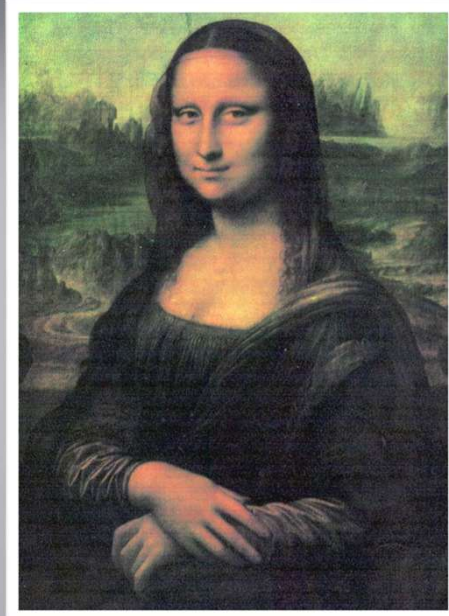
## Color



## Canvas and paint



## Painting



## Reconstructive imagination

- ❖ He suggested using *fantasia* (translated as "reconstructive imagination," Berlin, 1976) as a tool for understanding the human world.
- ❖ Those who possess *fantasia* can trace a symbol to its origins, reconstruct it, understand its effects, and assess its value, similar to the artist who has created the artwork.
- ❖ Within the diverse expressions, there can be a unified understanding of humans.

## Reconstructive imagination

- ❖ Through the use of *fantasia* social scientists can penetrate into the core of these symbolic representations to understand their underlying dynamics, such as trying to understand the meaning and goals of impressionist painters such as Édouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir or Claude Monet.

## Reconstructive imagination

- ❖ Vico advocated historical and comparative analysis of culture to ascertain the unified understanding of humans, a thesis later adopted by Wundt (1916).

# Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803)

## Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803)



❖ Another key figure representing the cultural sciences tradition is German philosopher Johannes Gottfried Herder.

## Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803)

- ❖ Like Vico, he saw limitations in the rationalist and empiricist approaches to understanding the human world and rejected the strict application of natural laws in the human sphere (Berlin, 1976).

## Populism

- ❖ He articulated *Populism*, *Expressionism* and *Pluralism*.
- ❖ *Populism* is the "belief in the value of belonging to a group or a culture" (Berlin, 1976, p. 153).
- ❖ *Völkgeist*, or the spirit of the people, is an example of a natural way to group human beings, similar to Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*.

## Populism

- ❖ It is defined as "a similar consciousness of many individuals, plus an awareness of this similarity, arising through similar descent and spatial proximity" (cf. Allport, 1968, p. 49).
- ❖ Each culture develops its own *Völkgeist* and its development is influenced by factors such as ecology, education, physical and biological needs, and relations with neighbors.

## Populism

- ❖ *Völkgeist* is expressed in speech, mythology, religions, folklore, art, literature, morality, custom, and law.
- ❖ *Völkgeist* shapes how people live, contemplate goals, imagine, think, feel, and behave and is communicated and shared through language.
- ❖ Individuals within a particular cultural community are united by common *Völkgeist* experiences.

## Expressionism

- ❖ *Expressionism* is the "doctrine that human activity in general, and art in particular, express the entire personality of the individual or the group, and are intelligible only to the degree to which they do so" (Berlin, 1976, p. 153).
- ❖ Herder believed that self-expression represents the very essence of a creative human being.

## Expressionism

- ❖ He believed that human products such as works of art are forms of communication, an expression of one's creativity.
- ❖ Other people could appreciate and understand these individual and cultural products through the process of *einfuhlen* ("empathy").



## Pluralism

❖ *Pluralism* is "the belief not merely in multiplicity, but in the incommensurability of the values of different cultures and societies."

(Berlin, 1976, p. 153).

## Pluralism

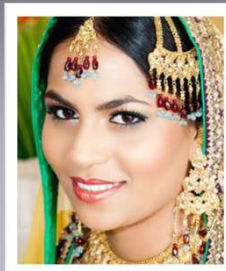
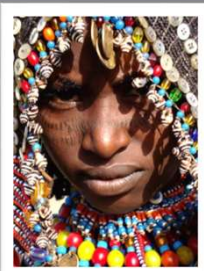
❖ Herder claimed that every culture possesses its own unique character: "all explanation, all understanding, indeed, all living, depends on a relationship to a given social whole and its unique past, and that is incapable of being fitted into some repetitive, generalized pattern"

(Berlin, 1976, p. xxiv).

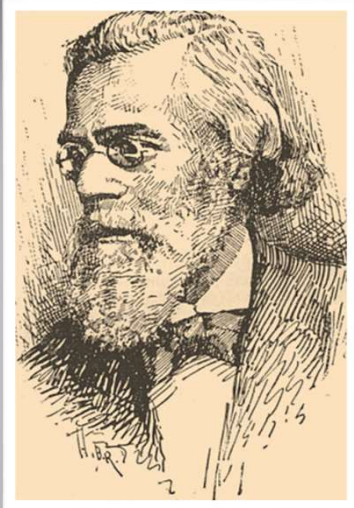
## Pluralism

- ❖ Herder noted that the tendency to judge ancient societies or other cultures by using one's own standard reflects cultural arrogance that could lead to distorted views.
- ❖ Herder believed that cultural diversity and social change are not only inescapable, but desirable. They are intrinsic part of the creative aspect of human nature.

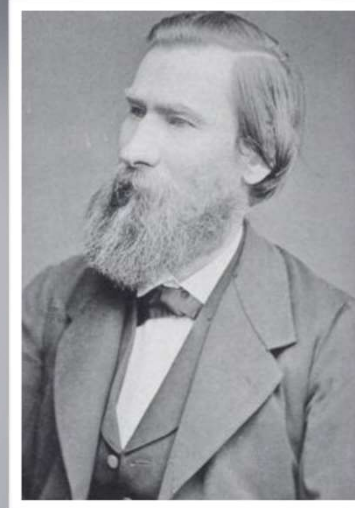
## What is the essence of beauty?



## Heymann Steinthal and Moritz Lazarus



Heymann Steinthal (1823–1899)



Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903)

## Heymann Steinthal & Moritz Lazarus

Heymann Steinthal (1823–1899) and Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903) provided a unique contribution to the cultural sciences tradition by empirically documenting the existence of diverse cultural patterns.

## J. of Cultural Psychology & Linguistic

- ❖ They published the first journal in psychology, *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* (Journal of Cultural Psychology and Linguistics).
- ❖ The journal covered topics such as religion, mysticism, geological and geographical knowledge, biological and medical knowledge, and the development and use of language, customs, beliefs, tales, and myths.

## J. of Cultural Psychology & Linguistic

- ❖ This knowledge was analyzed as to the cultural implications.
- ❖ The goal was to empirically verify the existence of *Völkgeist*.
- ❖ They used systematic observation and documentation, rather than speculating of cultural differences.

## J. of Cultural Psychology & Linguistic

- ❖ They relied on accounts of ethnographies compiled by writers, travelers, explorers, missionaries, and administrative officials.
- ❖ The study of individuals and a community is a topic for psychology in addition to philosophy, legal theory, politics.
- ❖ Culture and history involve psychological processes that are amenable to systematic empirical analysis.

## Summary

- ❖ These five scholars representing the cultural sciences including Wundt, provide a rich framework for understanding the human world.
- ❖ First, they argue that the human world is much more complex than the physical world, and that methods used by the natural sciences have limited applicability.

## Summary

- ❖ Additional tools such *fantasia*, *einfulen*, and introspection need to be utilized in the human world.
- ❖ The second major point is the emphasis on systematic observation and documentation.

## Summary

- ❖ The five scholars have articulated the importance of the descriptive research and historical analysis as the first step in discovering invariants within a particular culture.
- ❖ The third major point is the acceptance of the diversity of viewpoints, lifestyles, and cultures as being natural.

## Summary

- ❖ Diversity appears in response to a culture's unique history, ecological pressures, and collective needs.
- ❖ The use of one standard to judge other individuals or cultures reflects an inability to go beyond one's personal and cultural boundaries.
- ❖ This limitation is known as egocentrism at the individual level, and ethnocentrism at the cultural level.

## Summary

- ❖ Scientists as human beings are susceptible to both egocentrism and ethnocentrism.
- ❖ Fourth, these five scholars separate the content of representation from the style of representation.
- ❖ Although there are variations in human experiences across cultures in terms of their content, greatest variations occur in how these contents are manifested.

## Summary

- ❖ For example, all human beings have basic needs such as a need for food, water, air, rest, and sexual expression. The greatest diversity appears in how these needs are satisfied.